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Professor Robert Black Delivers Valedictory Lecture

PHOEBE MULLEN

On Thursday September 19th, Dr. Robert Black gave his valedictory lecture. Dr. Black began teaching at Houghton in 1991 as a professor of economics. He received his B.A. in economics from West Virginia Wesleyan College in 1972, his M.A. from West Virginia University in 1979, and his Ph.D. from the same institution in 1984. When asked how he became interested in economics, Dr. Black said, "I enjoyed undergraduate economics courses, my major at West Virginia Wesleyan College. That led me to continue with graduate studies." Before coming to Houghton, Dr. Black taught for short periods between 1979 and 1991 at Pennsylvania State University, the University of Delaware, Drexel University, and King College in Bristol, Tennessee.

Dr. Black's lecture was introduced by Dr. Richard Stegen. Professor Emeritus of psychology, Dr. Stegen taught at Houghton from 1982 to 2016. In his introduction, Dr. Stegen com-



COURTESY OF HOUGHTON COLLEGE TWITTER

plimented Dr. Black's teaching style: "The first aspect of relating to anything is cognitive-knowledge. Grasping it, understanding. The second part of relating to anything is... [the] emotional aspect, feeling something... valuing it. And then the third aspect is volitional, having to do with the will and action... he does it all. He imparts the knowledge, but he tries to show you the value it has, and then he applies [it]."

The title of Dr. Black's lec-

ture was "There is No Such Thing as Free Market." Dr. Black began by explaining his premise, which is that every market has some form of control on it, even if the government does nothing to interfere. A large portion of the talk focused on the private institutions, particularly churches and families, which impart values on people. An example is the American Protestant traditions which valued hard work. If enough people in an economy

have a value, Black argued, the economy will either grow or suffer because of it.

Honus Wagner ('20) commented, "[The lecture] was stimulating. And I appreciated getting to listen to the valedictory lecture of such a legendary professor whom I have not ever had a class with." An International Development and Philosophy double major, Wagner has had little opportunity to hear Black speak. He added, "It was very interesting to hear

his unique perspective, as an economist, on institutional arrangements, and how customary institutions especially are able to produce positive government outcomes."

Dr. Black technically retired in May; while he is no longer teaching, he says, "I plan to submit several papers for review this fall. I hope to have assistance from Houghton students on these projects." After that, "I will continue writing and speaking at least until I finish the ideas already in process, Lord willing. I also plan to visit our family members more than we could before. There remains much work to do around the house in the next year. After that, Pat and I are looking for the Lord's direction." Dr. Black will also travel to Arkansas in October to give a talk similar his valedictory lecture.

Wagner noted his appreciation for Dr. Black's contribution to the "varied talents [and] specializations of our Houghton faculty. There's a quite interesting mosaic." ★

Cross Country Update

RODNEY SHEPARD
Sports Writer

On Friday September 13th, the mens' and women's cross country teams traveled two hours to Penn State Behrend. Both the men's and women's teams ended with second place finishes, had twelve medalists in the top 25, and had senior Tyler Deuschle (the Empire 8 runner of the week) walking away as the top performer on the men's team. Asked about how he felt about the race, Deuschle said, "The race was interesting to say the least. [Head Coach Patrick Hager and I] actually wanted to keep the first mile of the race more conservative but I ended up getting caught up in the race and going out a little faster than planned. I distinctively remember coming by the 1-mile mark of the race and Coach Hager saying, 'Might as

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Mosaic Center Launches Chapel Talkbacks

MATTHEW UTTARO
Regular Contributor

Dr. Joanne Barnes was featured in the Mosaic Center's first ever chapel talkback session. The sessions are a new event in the Center this year under its new director, Nuk Kongkaw. Nuk is a 2011 graduate of Houghton, and she comes back to the college from Indiana Wesleyan University, where she served in the Office of Intercultural Learning and Engagement. It was there that she met Dr. Barnes and had the opportunity to work with her. Nuk invited Dr. Barnes to take part in the talkback session to provide students a space where they can ask a chapel speaker questions and engage in meaningful conversation about the topics they presented. On Monday, a number of students attended that talkback session and spoke with Dr. Barnes about the experiences they have had here at Houghton relating to diversity, inclusion, as well as unconscious stereotypes and biases, and how to



COURTESY OF INDIANA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY WEBSITE

deal with these situations.

"I invited her to be a part of the talkback session in the Mosaic Center, in case students have more questions," Kongkaw said, "and I think representation is really important, of us getting to see someone that looks like you in a position of leadership speaking on the chapel stage."

Dr. Barnes' research involves, according to the Indiana Wesleyan University website, "cultural intelli-

gence, multicultural leadership, and the cross-transferability of Western-based theories and assessments to Eastern European and Asian cultures." She currently teaches global leadership and theory, organizational behavior and theory, and adult and organizational learning.

"It is my life," she said. Barnes has studied inclusivity and similar phenomenon for more than a decade. Growing up as an African-American woman, she says that diversity and "fitting in" were simply just a part of her life. She deeply believes that she is called to share her knowledge on this subject. "I believe that, as a leader, it is my responsibility to share my knowledge about topics such as bias, intersectionality, inclusion, diversity and to equip others in this area to be successful." She also cites the need for action as another source of inspiration. "Often it is easy to complain about what is wrong and about social injustice; however, to make a difference, you must act. Therefore, my inspiration is a call to action." ★

Esh Delivers Constitution Day Lecture

HANNAH FRASER

In honor of Constitution Day, on September 20th, Professor Christian Esh delivered his lecture, "A Tale of Two Constitutions: The Liberal-Conservative Debate from the Early American Republic." He began his inquiry into this topic in 1996, so he said it was "especially poignant" for him to be able to give a lecture on his research at the same college from which he graduated in 1998.

Prof. Esh explained various approaches Americans have taken to understanding the Constitution. Joseph Story argued in the early 1800s that the Constitution should protect against the majority by protecting transcendent rights, and that its ideals are timeless and connect Americans to the nation's founders. Prof. Esh

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Developing News: Painted Boxes Appear in Front of Library



COURTESY OF CALEB FESMIRE

JOHANNA FLOREZ

Wooden boxes - covered in black paint and splattered with purple and gold - were placed in front of the Willard J. Houghton Library at some point on Sunday September 22nd or Monday September 23rd. David Stevick, Houghton's Director of Libraries and Information Resources,

has no information on what he describes uncertainly as a "public art installation?" On Monday September 23rd, the STAR reached out to Jared Hobson and Abby Aguirre (hosts of Homecoming SPOT) to comment. They also deny any knowledge of the boxes. ★

EPIC Adventures Opens New Ropes Course

DAVID BOWERS

Over the summer, Houghton's Ropes Course saw the addition of an all-new course, called the EPIC Square. To promote this launch, EPIC Adventures will be hosting the first-ever Ropes Course Open House on Sunday, September 29th.

EPIC Adventures—short for Experiential Programs | Intentional Community—was known as Wilderness Adventures until the fall of 2018. Its director, Dr. Laura Alexeichik, says EPIC's goals are "leadership development, environmental awareness, individual growth, and moral excellence," and hopes the Ropes Course can help it accomplish those goals. The EPIC Square adds several significant elements to the pre-existing course, which was built in 1979. These include z-shaped balance beams and a single-line bridge. The EPIC Square is easily visible from the trail to the Overlook. Alexeichik says she hopes the Open House will allow "students to experience the fun and challenge of the ropes course," which she notes many people haven't even heard of.

Alyssha Bettinger, a student intern with EPIC Adventures since its renaming, says, "My favorite thing about our course is that we have variety and aren't limited with just one or two elements. We are blessed to have several different activities that give us options when leading groups."

Asked about the course's impact on groups who use it, Bettinger says, "Problem solving, team encouragement, lead-

ership development, and overcoming challenges are some top growths that I've seen groups hold on to after spending time on our high and low ropes course elements." Hannah Haskell, a group facilitator for EPIC Adventures, adds, "Although the ropes course—especially the new addition—can be intimidating, the groups have overcome that fear and conquered the elements."

Bettinger also offered encouragement to people who haven't ever experienced a ropes course: "Our elements are designed for you to have fun while being chal-

lenged at the same time. When you experience an obstacle and overcome it, you start to realize that you can accomplish much more than you imagined. You learn to believe in yourself!"

The Ropes Course is available for use by students, faculty and staff, in addition to community members. Students interested in using the Ropes Course with a group, or in learning about any of the other activities EPIC Adventures facilitates, should email epicadventures@houghton.edu. ★



COURTESY OF LAURA ALEXEICHIK

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well just go for the win.' So I took the lead at 1 1/2 miles and never looked back. Winning is always nice but it has become less about wanting the glory for myself and more about doing what I can to help the team achieve our goals. The team we have this year is special the talent and depth is the best in the entire conference."

On the women's team, Shelby Langlois ('20) finished in 7th place out of 25 runners, which was the top performance from any female Highlander runner. When asked about the race Langlois said, "This was my 4th go around at PSU Behrend. We've done it every year since my freshman year and this year we got second place as a team!" The women's team also saw great performances from Emily Blodale ('20) who finished

9th, Amanda Burrichter ('23) who finished 12th, and Rachel Domaracki ('23) who finished 21st. Hager was pleased with his team's performance at PSU Behrend. Hager said, "We raced well at PSU [Behrend]. ... Tyler Deuschle winning the race was great progress coming off an injury. The courses were a bit off distance, but I was pleased with our race. Both teams finished second and came home with a plaque. We had twelve kids medal."

The Highlanders' most recent race was away at Roberts Wesleyan College in Rochester, NY on September 21st. The hot and humid weather did not go unnoticed throughout the race. The men finished eighth out of a total of 21 teams that featured both NCAA Division II and Division III schools. Prior to the race Hager said, "Roberts will be a bigger and more competitive field of teams. This is the first race we will really let loose

and try to get out and stay out. We are hoping to run toe to toe with conference rival Nazareth." The Highlanders reached their goal as both the men and the women defeated Nazareth College, the other representative from the Empire 8 conference. John Vernick ('20) and Dan Russo ('22) both finished with an 8k personal best.

On the women's team, in the three straight years they have competed at this course, Shelby Langlois ('20), Emily Blodale ('20), and Shannon Pigott ('20) ran their fastest time at the course. After the race Shelby Langlois said, "Today the the heat definitely took its toll on the race as a whole. However, we were able to get two girls in the top 30. We were able to place seventh out of nineteen teams." When asked what the best part about the race was, Langlois said, "The best part about today was the attitude I saw from my team. Compet-

ing is worth it when you have a coach who inspires, a captain who motivates, and teammates who take good care of each other."

The next time Highlander fans can see the men's and women's cross country teams in action on campus will be Saturday, October 5th at the Houghton Invitational. ★

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pointed to Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address as evidence of how revered the Constitution and its framers were less than a century later.

The Constitution Day lecture was a special event (not part of the Faculty Lectures series) and was open to anyone interested in attending. After being told to do something fun, Rachel Huchthausen, a first-year student, thought, "Why not go to one of these lectures?" She reported

that she attended the lecture because it seemed interesting and was connected to information she learned last year, and said she "really enjoyed it." Specifically, she resonated with Esh's explanation of historical perspectives on the Constitution: "We need a background of the document in order to understand it," she said.

Despite differences in interpretation, there is broad agreement that the Constitution provides for a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Although interpreting the Constitution can be complicated, as Huchthausen said, "We just need to know about it since it's our founding document." ★

There's still space to join the writing team!

Students in any major and any year are welcome to write once or on a regular basis.

Email editor@houghtonstar.com to let us know what you're interested in!

International Voices

Anna Trimble

Anna Trimble is a biology major from the class of 2021; the STAR reached out to her to share a bit about her experience of living for five years, from 4th to 8th grade, in Lahore, Pakistan.

Q: What was the experience of adjusting to that culture and then of returning to the states like?

A: "When I first moved to Pakistan, I really struggled to immerse myself into the culture. I went through a period of culture shock and found it difficult to enjoy the unique experiences I was having as well as to connect with the people in our community. I found it to be isolating and I grew very close to my family in this time. As time went on I eventually adjusted but when my family moved back to the U.S., I was excited. I started high school in the U.S. and found it to be a very pleasant experience. However, I felt I had to hold back on talking about my experience overseas and how it has shaped me. I was a "hidden immigrant." No one could look at me and tell I had lived overseas, but I didn't always understand American traditions and habits as well as I had a large plethora of knowledge about Asia and Pakistani culture. Once I started college two years ago at Houghton, I was finally in a place where I got to explore how I had grown from my international experience. This past summer was the first time since I left Pakistan that I traveled back to Asia. I went on a mission trip to Nepal and it was a healing experience where I got to appreciate and immerse myself into the culture so much more easily."

Q: How would you say the overall experience affected the different areas of your life? For instance, has it impacted your faith, does it impact the way you approach your studies or the way you relate to the Houghton community?

A: "Living internationally opened me up to change and differences. I feel like I have a unique understanding of other people and I can use that when interacting with others, especially those from other places. I have the opportunity to share

with other people a broader perspective of the world. Spiritually, my family's journey is one of the best God stories I know. He provided so much for each stage in my life and the way that he so clearly carried my family through each stage is amazing."

Q: Is there one part of your time abroad you wish every student at Houghton could have a chance to experience?

A: "When someone travels to a place that is culturally different from their home, everything is different. Not just the distinct features of a culture but every small detail. The places you go to shop, the jokes other people make, the language, the little social cues that are normal in one place but not in another, etc. Living one day in a place so different is exhausting mentally, emotionally, and physically. Everything done in that day must be considered from a new perspective and you feel like you're walking on eggshells in every social interaction, making sure you don't offend someone or miss out on what is going on. And when you do mess up, it is 100 times worse because everyone else knew what to do except you.

So when you see someone from your culture, be it a family member, a friend, or even a stranger, it's natural to cling to those people. When you enter a room, and only one other person looks like you, that is the person you are most likely to talk to. Speaking in your native tongue is the sweetest sound when you have just spent all day struggling to translate from one language to another just so you can communicate with the people around you.

So what I wish every student at Houghton could have the chance to experience is a day like that. A day where they are culturally uncomfortable. I think that there is so much one day could teach you about people different from you, especially in ways to love and support them. It suddenly makes sense on why there are cultural divisions at Houghton, why the Interconnect kids are always together and why having the Mosaic center is so vital to support our diverse student body." ★

Local Attractions

Moss Lake



COURTESY OF JULIA WILMOT

JULIA WILMOT

Did you know that less than three miles off-campus is Houghton's own hidden treasure? Moss Lake Preserve, located on Sand Hill Road, is an eighty-two acre National Natural Landmark most notable for its thirty-five-acre kettle bog lake. Kettle bog lakes are water-filled depressions left from a continental glacier thousands of years ago, and this one is covered with sphagnum moss (better known as "peat moss"), giving it the name Moss Lake.

The preserve is home to an abundance of wildlife. There are over fifty kinds of plant-life on the moss bog itself, a few of which are carnivorous like pitcher plants and sundew. Cranberries can be found on the bog, and wintergreen berries surround the lake in various locations. During the winter, the evergreen trees provide a nice contrast to the white snow, and during the late winter and early spring, many blooming flowers provide pleasant aromas.

Seventy-five species of birds have been spotted spending time on and around the lake, for instance, various osprey, geese, ducks, and swan will fly in a few days at a time. The lake itself is home to multiple fish species, most commonly bullheads. Occasionally a trail walker can find evidence of assorted mammal tracks, including deer, foxes, coyote, and the occasional bear.

Surrounding the lake is a mile-long lower loop trail, with a boardwalk out onto the bog. Alternate trails can be taken further from the lake's edge and deeper into the woods surrounding. The trails are open year-round to the public, dawn to dusk. Provided along the trail are benches, picnic tables, and a few signs dedicated to explain-

ing the natural history of Moss Lake.

In 1857 Moss Lake and much of the land nearby was bought by a Mr. Jesse Bacon, who at the time was a minister connected to the Wesleyan church. The property was passed down through the Bacon family to Elsie Bacon Hotchkiss and her husband Orville Hotchkiss.

Throughout the years the area was owned by the Bacon and Hotchkiss family, the land around the lake was used for farming and cattle ranching, with ice being pulled from the lake in the winter to fill nearby ice houses. Various structures were built on the property, including barns for farming and a windmill that would direct water to the nearby train station. When taking a journey off the beaten path, it is possible to find foundations of some of these structures today.

In 1957 Orville Hotchkiss was approached by a couple of peat moss harvesters who wanted to buy the bog. A former science professor from Houghton College convinced Orville to instead sell the land to the Nature Conservancy in order to protect the beautiful landmark. The farmland on the property has since become woods and home to the wildlife seen today.

If you ever want to take a short trip down the road off-campus, grab a friend and explore God's beautiful and wonderful creation that is Moss Lake. Take a short, easy hike around the lake and onto the boardwalk to enjoy the view of the bog and the iconic white house with a red roof that is still the home of the Hotchkiss family. Rain, shine, snow, or high water, the beauty of Moss Lake is always incredible. ★

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Email josiah.wiedenheft22@houghton.edu to contribute to either of these columns or to suggest another!

Nuk Kongkaw Joins Mosaic Center Staff

LUKE HUIZENGA
Regular Contributor

Houghton’s Mosaic Multicultural Center is welcoming a new faculty member this year: Ms. Nuk Kongkaw, who, after graduating in 2011, has returned to her alma mater to be the Mosaic Center’s new Director. Leaving Houghton with an Intercultural Studies/TESOL double major, Kongkaw moved to China, where she taught at an international school for three years. When she returned to the United States, she studied to get her master’s degree in Counselling.

Other members of the Mosaic Center are excited to see Kongkaw as the new director. Dr. Anna Pettway, who works for the Mosaic Center as Advisor for Inclusive Excellence, was part of the hiring committee. She says that “[Kongkaw] has a really unique ability to integrate her faith with... the academic side of understanding racial tension and racial injustice.”

Pettway is also looking forward to some of Kongkaw’s upcoming changes. One of the Mosaic Center’s difficulties, Pettway says,



COURTESY OF NUK KONGKAW

is ensuring that everyone feels welcome. Pettway explains that one of the new Director’s primary goals is to create positions for Student Ambassadors. This will be a way Kongkaw can begin to connect everyone to the Mosaic Center. The hope is that more people will feel welcomed when they see fellow students intention-

ally reaching out and inviting them to see the Mosaic Center for themselves.

Another staff member working with Kongkaw is Student Advisor for Inclusive Excellence Merris Ackon (’20), who sheds some light on what she has been discussing with Kongkaw: “We’ve talked about the semester on how we plan on making

the place more inclusive and hosting more events.” Ackon says she especially hopes that the Mosaic Center’s upcoming Talkbacks with chapel speakers will encourage more people to visit. “I encourage each student to come here and actually get to know the place... [Nobody] should feel like they don’t belong here.”

Kongkaw herself acknowledges that there is an obvious hesitancy among many students to spend time in the Mosaic Center. She is quick to address it, saying, “Houghton as an institution has a long legacy of wanting to be inclusive, but it takes time.” Through these events and student ambassadors, she is confident that the campus will see change, albeit not as quickly as she would like. Kongkaw says that she is thrilled to be working with college students and is ready to invest in everyone willing to get involved with the Mosaic Center and its larger goal of intercultural inclusion. Simply put, she says, “I’m here to be a bridge builder.” This characteristic is invaluable for the new director, as the most important thing to her right now is bringing Houghton together and helping people become more comfortable crossing the lines of race and culture.

“I love my students,” Kongkaw says. Each person working with her is emphatic that anyone and everyone is welcome at the Mosaic Center. ★

Students Engage with Christian Philosophy Scholars

ANNA JUDD

On the weekend of Sept. 14th, seven Houghton students had the opportunity to attend a conference held by the Society of Christian Philosophers. The school’s three philosophy professors – Dr. John Giannini, Dr. Heidi Giannini, and Dr. Benjamin Lipscomb – led the trip to Hope College in Holland, Michigan, where the event was held. There were Houghton connections among the speakers as well as the audience; Dr. Heidi Giannini and Morgan Flannery (a 2019 Houghton graduate now studying at New York University) both presented papers exploring liturgy from a philosophical perspective.

Besides these and other presentations on aspects of ritual and worship, the schedule included such varied topics as psychology and personhood, the problem of evil, and issues in epistemology (the study of knowledge). Shannon Pigott (’19) says that one of her favorite sessions discussed “how Christian theism offers hope for the problem of the practical disunity that often exists between a person’s commitment to being virtuous and that same person’s ‘natural’ or bodily desires.” This is just one example of the way Christian belief informed

the work of all the presenters. The modelling of academic rigor and sophistication fused with strong faith commitment, a value that Houghton works to promote among its students, was perhaps one of the greatest benefits to the Houghton students who were present.

Several of the students who attended the conference are majoring in philosophy, and found it was a valuable opportunity to grow in their understanding of their chosen field. Tyler Stetson (’20) observes that, “As an undergraduate student, it’s hard to picture what graduate students and professional philosophers are working on” outside of a teaching context. Attending the SCP conference offered these students a glimpse of the discussions that occur among professional academics who are busy working out their own ideas; the atmosphere was one of exploration and debate, which many of the attendees found intellectually stimulating. “I left intellectually refreshed and encouraged to continue reading, thinking carefully, and engaging others in thoughtful argument and discussion,” says Pigott. Her sentiment seems to be a common one among the group.

Not all the students who attended came from the philosophy department, however. “Although I’m an environmental bio and writing major



COURTESY OF HOPE COLLEGE WEBSITE

Hope College hosted the Society of Christian Philosophers conference.

and philosophy doesn’t play a big role in my academics anymore, I love spending time with the people in the department and reconnecting with my liberal arts roots from freshman year,” says Melissa Hodde (’20). “Thinking about the definition of personhood, the nature of the Trinity, and the possibility of infinite multiverses with a group of people who have the vocabulary and mental tools to do it well is way off the beaten path of my day to day challenges.” She

echoes Pigott’s judgement that the intellectual demands of the trip were “refreshing,” showcasing the potential cross-disciplinary value of philosophy.

Though the conference itself was the main draw, the trip also provided a chance for attendees to get away from Houghton’s campus for a few days and explore a new place. On Saturday afternoon after the conference ended, the group took time to visit a large farmer’s market in downtown Holland and take a swim in

Lake Michigan. There were also opportunities to relax during the conference, despite the busy schedule. “Holland has a lovely downtown with lots of cute shops, and my host at Hope College took most of us out for sushi in that part of the neighborhood on the first night,” says Hodde. It is no surprise, though, that that evening’s keynote presentation on personhood in split-brain patients formed part of the content for the conversation. ★

“We Just Have to Keep Faith in Him”: Bekah Scharf’s Faith Journey

MOLLY BRIZZELL
Regular Contributor

“I really wanted them to see that whatever they’re going through, God has it all.”

Bekah Scharf (‘21), the Executive Officer of Spiritual Life, was intent upon achieving this goal for her Houghton audience during the September 13th chapel service. The Koinonia worship leader shared her nerves in the beginning, but continued to talk as if they had completed faded—and took Houghton with her through her journey of faith. She shared her thoughts on controversial topics and was open about the way she felt—and still feels—lost in life. Yet, she reminded the Houghton students that it’s okay to feel this way, and there’s still a strong hope they have to grasp onto.

The idea of Scharf being the first one to share her faith journey this year was, according to Scharf, Dean Michael Jordan’s idea. “[He] contacted me and said that he wanted to start a tradition where the E.O. of S.L. [Executive Officer of Spiritual Life] gives the first faith journey of the school year,” Scharf shared with the STAR. “I agreed.”

Faith journeys are important to Dean Jordan, who shared with the STAR why Houghton includes them. “[It’s] meant to be a time when we can be thankful together for God’s work in someone’s particular life,” he said. Faith journeys are a Houghton tradition, where—later in the semester—students can nominate any senior student, faculty, or staff member to share theirs in chapel. Dean Jordan



Bekah Scharf on the stage in Wesley Chapel.

COURTESY OF JESSI SACCO

particularly likes this because “they give the students a direct say into who they’re hearing in chapel.” The first faith journey, however, is now given to the EO of Spiritual Life, as Scharf shared. Dean Jordan does this in order for students to become familiar with the EO and hear their own stories.

It wasn’t, however, Dean Jordan’s request alone that brought Scharf to the Wesley Chapel stage. Scharf felt that her story needed to be shared

so students wouldn’t feel alone in their struggle. “After looking at my life and seeing what God is doing and where I’m at, I felt that there were a lot of people in my position, or could relate to what I had to say,” Scharf said, “—and maybe by hearing those things from a student leader they would be filled with a sense of hope.”

Hope was a huge part of Scharf’s message. It was the foundation of her journey, showing the Houghton audi-

ence that no matter what Scharf endured, she was still able to grasp onto the hope that God would be there to save her—and God could do just the same for them. One of her close friends, Brendon Seney (‘22)—who played the keys for her chapel service—has seen how this belief has played out in Scharf’s life, and how she’s grown. “I’ve mostly seen her become a much stronger and more faithful person in general,” Seney shared, “It’s been obvious she’s gone

through such a period of growth and maturity in her faith, in her life as a student, and within herself.” This is the point that Scharf wanted to hammer home. “Whether it’s a struggle with [our] faith or some social problems [we’re] facing, God knows what’s going on,” Scharf shared. “—and all we really have to do is just let Him take the wheel and drive for us.”

And, according to Nicole Soggs (‘20), Scharf succeeded. Soggs shared a long conversation with Scharf after her chapel service, and what she gained from both the service and their discussion. “Bekah’s main point was that it’s okay to have no clue what the heck you’re doing—that God’s got it all under control,” Soggs said. “You have to cling onto hope and to the promises in the Word in times like that.” Soggs even related to Scharf’s story in the way she had hoped people would. “Bekah’s story mirrors mine in so many ways,” Soggs shared. “I was so glad to hear that there was another person like me out there, that I wasn’t alone in this struggle.”

Soggs’ words about Scharf’s testimony support the importance of sharing faith journeys in chapel. It creates an open environment where students can feel more at ease and relate to other students on campus, just as Dean Jordan stated. Scharf wanted to accomplish this with her testimony, and she succeeded. As Soggs put it, “We’re all human, and we have questions. It’s okay to speak up. It’s an opportunity to encourage one another and be a reminder of the goodness of God.” ★

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the Photo of the Week section!

Email submissions to
houghtonstar@gmail.com
to be featured



Uniting Diversity for Christ’s Kingdom



JOHANNA FLOREZ AND
DAVID BOWERS

What should a newspaper produced by Christians for an ideologically diverse, but mostly Christian readership look like? It’s an important question for us to consider, as the co-editors-in-chief, but we’ve found that the lessons we’ve learned so far are vital for any Christian who longs for God’s kingdom to be built on earth. At its core, the Christian’s mission is to advance the kingdom of God.

In our case, we’re trying to use good journalism to contribute to a campus culture that produces kingdom workers. In your case, you could accomplish that end in a thousand ways. But there will be one theme common to your work and ours: we do not work alone. Success in our mission necessitates working in harmony with other members of the body of Christ.

As we think about this joint project, we offer two primary suggestions about how Christians can work together.

The first suggestion we’ve learned so far is the importance of working in unity with a team whose skill sets complement each other. David is very big-picture-oriented, while Johanna is detail-focused. This difference could be perceived as a fundamental disconnect in perspective, or instead it can be leveraged as two important aspects of the editor-in-chief’s role. If one person can spout ideas and the other can turn them into actionable to-do lists, the goal of the team is met more effectively than if only one of these skills sets is present. While we had a preexisting friendship with each other and with Caleb, the only returning member of staff, we intentionally looked beyond the limits of our friend group to find other people who would bring different experiences and skills to the team.

We may be tempted to compete: “Johanna holds the staff together with her managerial skills!” “David is the most valuable member of the STAR team because he has so many ideas for features and columns!” “News is the most important section!” “Opinions best represents the voice of the student body!” In reality, all talents and areas of interest contribute to the excellence of the whole.

First Corinthians 12 speaks to the duty of Christ’s church to value the diversity of gifts within it. “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ... If

tice. Look at your roommate or your best friend and make a list of the things about you and the things about them that work well together. Intentionally interact with them in ways that use those strengths, and keep track of what happens. In doing so, you will discover both the unity and diversity of the body of Christ in a way that will help you advance the kingdom.

The second suggestion is that we foster an atmosphere within the Church where criticism is not threatening. The preexisting friendships on our staff have served us well when we have needed to give each other feedback on failures and correct errors. We are used to

“Diversity is the fundamental component of a team that is effective both in pragmatic matters and in honoring God by advancing the kingdom together.”

the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be?” (I Cor. 12:12, 17-19) It is crucial to understand that diversity of talents does not just make a team more interesting or exciting; diversity is the fundamental component of a team that is effective both in pragmatic matters and in honoring God by advancing the kingdom together.

This diversity must also be situated within the context of the Church’s profoundly united community. This goes beyond living with other people and enjoying them: it involves consciously articulating what distinct characteristics each person contributes and what others can learn from them. This practice is a major part of Houghton’s Sophomore Leadership Conference, which several current staff members attended in the spring of 2019. The conference required attendees to take several assessments of character qualities and skills, and then discuss in small teams of four to six people how to develop those skills. The intensive practice we got at the conference has served us well so far as we strive to know other well; but a focused conference opportunity is not the only way to develop this prac-

being gentle with each other and accepting criticism humbly. In that context, corrections do not feel like threats to the relationship. We know we are all partners in working well, and so we are free to consistently reflect on our performance and implement improvements suggested by people who understand how we operate— or, more importantly, people who understand the importance of continuing to learn how we operate.

“Patience with each other is a natural reaction when each member of a community can safely assume that everyone else is doing what they can to pursue God.”

It is easy to say to a newspaper staff at the beginning of the year, “We are all going to learn how to do this together.” It’s harder to expand this attitude across a campus, much less throughout the entire worldwide church. Nevertheless, patience with each other is a natural reaction when each member of a community can safely assume that everyone else is doing what they can to pursue God. In light of that shared goal, even frustrating differences are an opportunity to learn together rather than a

barrier to any individual goal.

We will run pieces this year with which many readers will disagree. But the ensuing conversations will be far more edifying if the writers and the readers both approach them with the intent to build the unity of the Church. Romans 14 speaks of the competing convictions of people who are sincerely endeavoring to serve God well. “One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.” (Rom. 14:5-6)

To be clear: we do not interpret this letter from Paul as advocating unbounded moral pluralism; some behaviors are clearly wrong and others are clearly right. Many issues that can be divisive among Christians do not fall neatly into the polar categories of right and wrong, however, but into the middle category of “different.” Some people feel closest to Christ’s suffering when they take wine in communion; others find alcohol distracting and feel closest to Christ when they drink grape juice in the service. Neither of these is wrong, unless either is not done “in remembrance of Me.”

Likewise, our devotional practices and our shopping habits and our voting preferences are all areas in which we can

disagree while wholeheartedly striving to honor God. Talking through these disagreements is a valuable process as long as the end goal is not “winning people to my side,” but rather, “winning glory for God.” This unity within the Church will advance the kingdom as others see how believers care for each other even while disagreeing.

“Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother,” Romans continues. “I know



COURTESY OF CALEB FESMIRE

and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.” (Rom. 14:13-15) We are allowed to entertain a diversity of opinions and practices, so long as they support other believers’ growth rather than hinder it. To return to the example of communion, the Wesleyan church and Houghton College have decided that it is healthier for the community as a whole for all of its members to abstain from alcohol in all contexts. We can abide by this covenant agreement without condemning friends or family members who consume alcohol, since it is not “unclean in itself.” This is a matter of “walking in love.”

If, then, we are to be Christians who glorify God by advancing his kingdom, we must do these two things. We must understand each other’s strengths and weaknesses in order to find where we are most needed in the body of Christ. And we must foster an environment within that body which views humble admonition as an opportunity for growth. As we do these things, our individual relationships with Christ can deepen, and His glory will be more evident to the rest of the world as they observe our love for Him and for each other. ★

Johanna is a junior majoring in education and English. David is a junior majoring in Intercultural Studies and is on the pre-med track.

Finding Assurance in a Competitive Culture



CHRISTOPHER THOMAS

amazing work and have learned multiple digital programs with seeming ease. Friends studying physics and mathematics have told me theories discussing how the universe works. They can solve all sorts of complex problems that look quite intimidating. Yet, my capable peers in all these areas of study and many others often lack one thing— confidence.

There are multiple understandable reasons why people may feel this way. We have grown up in an increasingly competitive culture that promotes getting ahead whatever way we can— even starting at grade school age. I’m sure

“...we compare ourselves to people who seemingly get all the attention from those we deem as important when we could have relationships with them too if we just stepped forward more often.”

of us have different interests and desires. We have been in schools that encouraged their students to join as many clubs as possible even if the activities did not interest us or help us develop the talents we want. We get discouraged when we hear about the so-called ac-

deem as important when we could have relationships with them too if we just stepped forward more often. We hear about troubles in the world or think of our own problems and wonder how anyone could overcome them. Yet, we forget that God has resolved many issues in our lives before and can do so again.

When we look closer at the ideals of this culture that promotes so much effort in almost every aspect of our lives, we see that it winds up making people feel more hopeless than ever, despite all the skills they have learned and work they have done. Competition and hard work can certainly be good things, but taken to these extremes they can drain us and make us feel disheartened since it always seems like there is someone who has done better.

The truth is, that many of our skills are very special and most of us just don’t realize it. God has given them to us and has allowed us to develop them. When people hear about the interests and expertise we have, they will often be very impressed. Sometimes we are just too hard on ourselves. We also don’t have to worry about competition to get into clubs at school or jobs in the market because if we seek God, He can get us where we need to be. This doesn’t mean we shouldn’t work hard. We should give a good effort to use and develop different skills to help us do God’s work, but we should remember that we can rest from the work we do by trusting in Him to provide for us. This will help us let go of the need to do everything and allow us to enjoy our time and focus on the things that matter most— God and the people He created. ★

Christopher is a senior majoring in business administration.

“When we look at the ideals of this culture..., we see that it winds up making people feel more hopeless than ever, despite all the skills they have learned and work they have done.”

many of us had teachers that pointed to everyone in the classroom and told us how we are all in competition with each other, even though many

complishments of others our age that have already made it big. Or, we compare ourselves to people who seemingly get all the attention from those we

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Artist of the Week

Katelyn Heins

// Senior Art Major



“Why art?” I have wrestled with this question for many years. I am wrestling with it this very moment. Originally it was an expressive escape. Now it has become liberation. Starting off, I do not think I made a conscious decision to make art, it is something I could not help but do. It was inescapable. Inevitable. Unavoidable; and trust me I have tried to avoid it. As much as it feels like torture sometimes (well, a lot of the times) I push on. I continue creating because of the affect art has on my life and those around me. We use tools to create art, but art is a tool that helps people arrive at a place where words cannot take them. Art chose me, therefore I choose art.

